

STATEMENT OF SENATOR GORDON H. SMITH  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
HEARING ON THE INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL'S  
INDIAN FOREST MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TEAM REPORT II  
MARCH 30, 2004

Good morning. The purpose of today's hearing is to present a forum for the second Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT) report on the state of Indian forests and forestry. The recently published report does an excellent job of assessing the effectiveness and success of tribal forestry practices. I hope this will shed light on the role that American Indian tribes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and tribal consortiums play in the management of the 18 million acres of forest land held in trust.

The Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) is a nonprofit nation-wide consortium of Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and individuals dedicated to improving the management of natural resources of importance to Native American communities and represents more than 90% of the forest land held in trust. The Secretary of Interior contracted the ITC for the second time to oversee this assessment. The ITC turned to a group of nationally recognized experts, including many of the same individuals from the first report, to complete the second IFMAT report (IFMAT II).

The IFMAT-II report assesses eight tasks specified in the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (NIFRMA). Among these is an in-depth analysis of management practices, a survey of the condition of Indian forestlands, and a recommendation for any reforms.

The IFMAT report describes the substantial progress made toward sustainability in Indian forests since the first report. However, significant gaps still remain. Today's hearing highlight the progress made in the last 10 years since the last IFMAT report. We will also hear suggestions on how to help tribal forests reach their full potential.

Finally, it is important to note that the ITC and the BIA Forestry program have worked together to make the Forestry program one of the best in the Bureau, despite the program's limited staffing. The two organizations work closely together and BIA attends all ITC Board meetings. More recently, the ITC has been working with the US Forest Service to improve relations there, and has also established relations with the National Association of State Foresters. Thus, Indian forest management is an excellent example of the benefits to government-to-government cooperation.

I thank the witnesses for appearing before the Committee and look forward to their testimony today. Mrs. Martin we'll begin with you, with Mr. Colegrove to follow. Finally, we'll hear from Dr. Gordon. Thank you.